

Self-help Law Program		Agency/Program #: 2110-01-l2
		Division: Supreme Court Ops
		Program: Self-help Law Program
Agency Name:	Judicial Branch	
Agency Contact:	Lois Menzies	841-2957
LFC Contact:	Representative Hiner and Senators Bales and Schmidt	
LFD Liaison:	Pat Gervais	444-1795
OBPP Liaison:	Brent Doig	444-4118

Program or Project Description:

The 2007 Legislature appropriated \$505,000 (OTO) from the state general fund to the Supreme Court for the 2009 biennium to provide self-help legal tools, information, and training to persons involved in the civil legal system without direct representation by an attorney (pro se).

Appropriation, Expenditure and Source					
Fund Name:	2008		2009		Approp & Expenditure numbers are as of August 31, 2008
	Approp.	Expended	Approp.	Expended	
General Fund	171,354	171,354	333,646	23,588	
State Special	0	0	0	0	
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	
Total:	\$171,354	\$171,354	\$333,646	\$23,588	

Goal(s):

Increase access to Montana's courts for individuals unable to afford an attorney by creating, distributing, and maintaining resources for self-represented litigants.

Performance Measures :

Results of initial program evaluation (available November, 2008)
Also see milestones

2009 Biennium Significant Milestones:		Completion Dates	
		Target	Actual
1	Hire statewide coordinator		Aug-07
2	Complete contract agreement for self-help form and instruction developer		Sep-07
3	Complete funding agreements for staffed self-help centers in Yellowstone and Flathead Counties		Nov-07
4	Train staff for self-help centers in Yellowstone and Flathead Counties and open centers		Dec-07
5	Complete initial evaluation of self-help law program	Nov-08	

Develop judicial benchbook for handling cases involving self-represented litigants

Nov-08

Performance Report:

The Montana Supreme Court Self-Help Law Program provides access to the court system for civil litigants representing themselves in court. The program consists of three components: (1) staffed self-help law centers in Kalispell and Billings; (2) grant-funded programs to support self-represented litigants in eight judicial districts; and (3) a forms-development program in partnership with Montana Legal Services.

To date the following goals have been achieved:

- The self-help law centers have been operating for approximately seven months. Through August, 1,882 people had been served at the two centers. More than half of the people (59.6%) seeking assistance needed help with family law issues (divorce, custody, support, etc.). Other issues include name changes, debt collection, landlord/tenant issues and wills/estates/probate. Most people visiting the centers appear to be below, at or just above the federal poverty level. The vast majority of the people responding to customer satisfaction surveys (99.1%) indicated that they were either very satisfied (91.6%) or satisfied (7.5%) with the service.
- To supplement work being done in the self-help law centers, mini-grants have been awarded for the following purposes:
 - o 2nd Judicial District (Butte-Silver Bow County): public access computers to supplement local efforts in assisting litigants and financial support for continuing legal education for pro bono attorneys;
 - o 4th Judicial District (Missoula and Mineral Counties): a partnership with the Missoula YWCA to hire an eight hour per week coordinator to assist self-represented litigants in family law matters;
 - o 8th Judicial District (Cascade County): public access computers and a part-time staff person to assist self-represented litigants through the Cascade County Law Clinic;
 - o 9th Judicial District (Glacier, Toole, Pondera and Teton Counties): in partnership with Teton County, a part-time coordinator to provide assistance to litigants in all four counties within the district.
 - o 10th Judicial District (Fergus, Judith Basin and Petroleum Counties): a partnership with Fergus County to provide a part-time staff person to provide assistance to litigants and to coordinate the efforts of pro bono attorneys in connection with document-review clinics;
 - o 12th Judicial District (Liberty, Hill and Chouteau Counties): a family law mediation program administered by a contract attorney and a laptop computer to assist pro bono attorneys in conducting family law classes;
 - o 18th Judicial District (Gallatin County): a partnership with the Community Mediation Center to assist self-represented litigants in connection with an existing pro bono family law clinic program;
 - o 21st Judicial District (Ravalli County): a partnership with a local law firm to assist litigants with child support calculations.

LFD Narrative:

LFD Assessment: On Track

Data Relevance: Yes

Appropriation Status: Provided

Comments/Issues: None

Workgroup Options:

- Change LFD assessment

-- Request that a copy of the November project review report be mailed to interested members



Version	Date	Author
AO-1	12/04/07	Gervais
DO-2	09/23/08	Gervais

Change Description
1st report
Sept. 2008 update